Recycling Website Best Management Practices

TIPS & POINTERS FOR YOUR WEBSITE

THE RECYCLING PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

Whether your community's recycling information is hosted on your city's website or on a separate website, it's likely the first place your residents go to learn how to recycle more, better. It also may be their place of last resort prior to "mis-cycling" or "wish-cycling" items.

Your website is your residents' information hub for details on obtaining a cart, knowing what to throw, and citywide collection schedules. It's your place for a call to action to recycle more, better in your social media posts, your press and media communications, and your print collateral.

Whether your community offers curbside or drop-off recycling, opt-in recycling, containers, or carts, there are simple steps you can take to make sure your residents get all of the information they need from your website.

Our best practices will help you get started.

Goals

Optimize your website to create an information hub for helping your community's residents recycle more, better.

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Best Practices for Technical Approaches

Security

Have you ever noticed the "s" at the end of some urls: http or https? The "s" stands for SSL - and it means that your website is more secure. It went from a nice to have for your website to basically essential in July 2018 when Google started flagging websites without it as "unsafe." Is your website secure? Simply go to your website and look at the URL. Read more here - or here - and make the upgrade as soon as you can if you need to. This will not only protect your users, it will affect how your site appears in search engines.

Mobile-Friendly

How does your website look if you visit it on your phone? Go ahead and try it out. Optimize your site for mobile. If it doesn't look great - contact your web team to see if they can optimize your website for mobile use. It not only improves your users' experience, it helps your website rank higher in search engines. You can start by ensuring your website is responsive (meaning it accommodates for the device size) and pages load quickly.

User Navigation

Consider adding breadcrumbs to show your users where they are within your navigation. This is simply another way to show where you are on a website - and displays an easy way to go back to where you were.

Best Practices for Design

Accessibility

Can all of your residents gain knowledge from your website? There are a variety of things you can do to make images work for low-vision individuals and for those that are hearing impaired. Follow Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for colors and contrast. Learn more here.

Consistency

Use consistent branding and styles throughout your website. This includes consistent use of colors and design themes in addition to fonts and font sizes. A website style guide can help ensure everyone on your team follows the set standards.

Best Practices for Content

Suggested Content

☐ **Collection Schedule -** Ensure your website has your collection schedule in addition to holidays and updates that may affect the schedule.

☐ **Drop-off Locations** - If your community has drop-off locations, be certain to include a list of what can be recycled there, hours, addresses, directions as well as days the location may be closed due to holidays.

☐ **Recycling Carts -** If your community provides recycling carts or containers, include information on how to obtain a cart for new homes, new movers, or replacement carts as well as what can be thrown and not thrown into the cart.

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Page Layout Tips

☐ Use simple, plain language in page titles and headlines. Ask yourself, "What do residents want to know about recycling? What words might they use when searching?"

☐ When possible, show, don't tell. Use short videos (3 minutes or less) and images to tell a story. These can be recorded on your cell phone. Take a few minutes and talk to your residents about something you want them to stop putting in their recycling or tell them about a special event you will be having – using plain language and point them to a page on your website for more information.

☐ Use bullet points and short sentences to allow users to quickly scan and review your content.

☐ Add links/buttons for residents to find your social media pages.

☐ Whenever possible, use photos of real people (with permission) from your community. Be mindful of diversity and inclusion. If photos from your community are not available, you can find royalty-free images at no cost at Pexels or Unsplash.

☐ Have a clear call to action - make it simple. Tell your residents what you want them to do. When you list your telephone number, make sure mobile users have an option to click to call. Make sure that your 311 or community information center has a script for the information needed about your recycling program and know the url for your webpage.

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Conclusions

While it may not be a magic wand, your community's website is your portal to helping your residents recycle more, better. Once you've employed these website best practices, you're on your way toward educating and empowering your community to be better recyclers.

Want to find more ways to improve your community's website? Connect with recycling coordinators across the nation in our City and County Recycling Coordinators Facebook Group.

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